CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 20 MARCH 2002 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF THE PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF TURKEY ON 15 MARCH 2002 ON INDEFINITE EXTENSION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE MORATORIUM ON THE EXPORT AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LAND MINES

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey on 15 March 2002 on the indefinite extension of the comprehensive moratorium on the export and transfer of anti-personnel land mines.

I would be grateful if the press release could be issued and circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed:) Murat SUNGAR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

GE. 02020 60999

ENG

INDEFINITE EXTENSION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE MORATORIUM ON THE EXPORT AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LAND MINES

In view of the human sufferings and casualties caused by anti-personnel land mines, the international community has long been endeavoring to take effective measures in order to prevent their use. The resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly calling on Member States to implement a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines constituted an important part of these efforts since 1993. In light of these resolutions, Turkey unilaterally declared on 17 January 1996 a comprehensive moratorium on all anti-personnel land mine exports and transfers for a renewable term of three years.

Moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land mines were superseded on 1 March 1999 by the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, which provides for the total prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of the said mines as well as their destruction. The security situation around Turkey precluded her from signing the Ottawa Convention at the time of its conclusion. Nevertheless, as an expression of her commitment to the humanitarian objectives of the Convention, Turkey extended her national moratorium on the export and transfer of anti-personnel land mines on 17 January 1999 for another three years. Turkey also concluded agreements with Bulgaria in March 1999 and with Georgia in January 2001, with a view to establishing regimes for keeping the common borders free from these mines.

After careful consideration, Turkey has now decided to accede to the Ottawa Convention. Moreover, Turkey and Greece have agreed to concurrently start the procedures that will make both countries parties to the Ottawa Convention. Turkey has come to the stage of submitting the Convention to the Turkish Grand National Assembly for finalization of the accession procedures.

In the meantime, the duration of Turkey's national moratorium on the export and transfer of anti-personnel land mines expired in January 2002. Turkey has decided to extend once again her moratorium on the export and transfer of anti-personnel land mines, this time indefinitely, as an expression of her sincere commitment to becoming party to the Ottawa Convention.

15 March 2002